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# PUBLIC HEALTH REPORTS

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## HEALTH DEPARTMENT LABORATORIES.

### THE NEED FOR THEIR CAREFUL SUPERVISION.

Recently in a city in New England an unusual number of cases of diphtheria were recorded.

Study of the cases showed that the diagnoses were based upon laboratory examinations. Further inquiry revealed that during the period of the unusual prevalence the examination of diphtheria cultures in the laboratory had been carried on by two different men, the usual bacteriologist and a temporary substitute who did the work part of the time. The findings of these men differed widely. The substitute bacteriologist did the work from May 27 to June 2, and of 46 specimens submitted for diagnosis he found 33 positive, 12 negative, and one liquefied.

From June 4 to June 16, inclusive, the regular bacteriologist was on duty, and of 51 specimens examined he found 8 positive and 43 negative.

From June 18 to July 7 the substitute was again on duty, and of 104 specimens examined he reported 77 positive and 27 negative.

From July 8 to 10, inclusive, the regular bacteriologist was on duty, and of 18 specimens examined he found 2 positive and 16 negative.

The apparent prevalence of a considerable outbreak of diphtheria was evidently due to the inexperience and lack of training of the substitute. In this connection one is reminded of the bacteriologist of the health department of a large city who, instead of examining his diphtheria specimens, threw them into the waste basket and marked the reports negative, a practice that was without serious result until a diphtheria epidemic assumed unusual proportions and was discovered only by accident.

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## MALARIA IN KENTUCKY.

### PREVALENCE AND GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION.

The periodical circularization of the physicians of Kentucky to determine the prevalence and geographic distribution of malarial infection in the State was begun July 1, 1914, and continued to the end of the calendar year 1916. At regular intervals reply postal cards were sent to the practicing physicians. These cards were at